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WEEKLY COLUMN

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Notes from the Georgia State Senate

A great week for Georgia

By Senator Bill Heath



We are in the home stretch with only six legislative days remaining in the 2006 session. The hours are getting late and our concentration has now shifted mostly to House bills, while at the same time trying to ensure that our legislation passes out of the House to go to the Governor's desk. As one might imagine, this involves a lot of running back and forth from the Senate floor to the House floor, and from office to office. I am quite pleased to say that the biggest news last week concerned job creation in our State.

Last week, Governor Sonny Perdue announced Kia Motor Corporation's plans to build a new assembly plant in the City of West Point. The company will invest \$1.2 billion in the State in a deal that will create as many as 5,500 new jobs. I had hoped Kia would bring a new manufacturing plant closer to our district, but this is still a huge victory for our State. In the long run, any job creation is great for us and the Kia plant will bring over 5,000 new jobs to Georgia, some of which could be filled by workers from Senate District 31.

Kia Motors will invest \$1.2 billion in the state of Georgia. The new manufacturing plant will be built on a 2,200-acre site, and it will produce two Kia vehicles. The site will also include an engine plant, a

paint shop, a training center, a welcome center and third-party contractors. Kia will employ about 2,893 people with average salaries of \$50,000 per year plus benefits. Also, five supplier companies will locate nearby and will employ an estimated 2,600 workers. Needless to say, I am very happy to bring all of you this exciting news.

Legislation that we passed last week also aims to help senior citizens in our State. A resolution that will encourage seniors to relocate and move to Georgia passed the Senate this week, extending the income exclusions on income tax for those over age 62. Senate Resolution 1085 passed by a vote of 49-2. This constitutional amendment needed at least 38 votes for passage. This is the right decision for our State. We lose a lot of people, particularly retirement age individuals, who are moving out of state. They are selling their homes and businesses and moving to Florida or other states in which they are not penalized for their personal income. If the House passes the constitutional amendment, it will be on the ballot in November to be approved by a majority of voters.

Lastly, I have spent much of my week working on legislation that will help the retirees of this State. As Chairman of the Senate Retirement Committee, I presented House Bills 251, 400, 644, 660 and 1020 in the Senate this week. These bills will help the teachers, firefighters and soldiers of Georgia. All of this legislation has received bipartisan support and passed unanimously. I think it is important that our retirement plans offer the best financial situations possible in the future, and many times this can be done at no cost to our taxpaying citizens.

Please feel free to call me with your opinions or suggestions. Until next week...

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Sen. Bill Heath represents the 31st Senate District, which includes all of Haralson and Polk Counties and parts of Bartow and Paulding Counties. He may be reached at 404.463.1361, or by email at billheath@billheath.net.